

Fleming Castle
5 Bonnel Street
Flemington, Hunterdon County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-406 HAES

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Fleming Castle
5 Bonnel Street
Flemington, Hunterdon County, New Jersey

Owner: Colonel Lowrey Chapter D. A. R.

Date of Erection: 1756

Architect:

Builder: Samuel Fleming

Present Condition: Restored

Number of Stories: Two and one-half

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - frame
construction, clapboards

Interior walls - plaster

Inside brick chimneys

Roof - gambrel

Historical Data:

The original title to the land on which the village of Flemington stands was held by Daniel Coxe and William Penn. The north portion was held by Coxe. The first purchase from Daniel Coxe was made by William Johnson in 1731, a purchase of two hundred and ten acres. In 1754 a son of William Johnson, Samuel, purchased from Coxe one hundred and five acres. The next year he sold four acres from this tract to William B. Potter and on June 11, 1756 Potter sold to Samuel Fleming. Fleming is the recognized father of the village.

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Fleming kept a tavern in the present house which stood near Old Center Bridge Road since taken up. A town map of Flemington for the year 1822 shows that even at that date there were only two houses in the village not built on the main street, Fleming Castle was one of these. Fleming was unsuccessful in his business ventures and was sold out. Dr. George Creed bought the property. The 1822 map shows Charles Miller as the owner. The present caretaker, his son, who has a lifetime right in the house, was the owner from whom Mrs. Charles D. Foster bought the house. She gave it to the Colonel Lowrey Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Mr. Miller says that the house was originally built without partitions, one room up and one room down, and that the first floor partitions were put in by a Mr. Bonnel who owned the house and that his father was responsible for partitioning the second floor.

Samuel Fleming came from Ireland. With him came a boy named Thomas Lowrey. Lowrey married Fleming's daughter Ester. Fleming and Lowrey were both ardent patriots. Fleming, however, was not successful in his business ventures, but his son-in-law had marked success. Lowrey was one of the founders of the Amwell Baptist Church in 1765. He was a member of the Provincial Congress of 1777. During the war he was first a Lieutenant-Colonel and then a Colonel. After the war he was a member of the Legislature. In 1785 Lowrey sold out and moved to Frenchtown which he helped to found and he built up Milford which was for a time called Lowreytown.

Bibliography:

Snell, J. P. History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, New Jersey Philadelphia, Everts and Peck, 1881

Material from the caretaker Mr. Charles Miller collected by Cortlandt Van Winkle, Essex County Office


Supervising Historian

Approved:


SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer

mw 11/16/57


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Samuel Fleming was born in Ireland on April 2, 1707. It is not known when he came to this country, but court records show he was licensed to keep a tavern in Amwell Township in 1746. The house was built in 1756. It was considered a remarkable building for its day and so it was called "The Castle" by which name it is still known.

In 1765 Dr. George Greed, the first physician in the neighborhood, became the owner. It is not known at exactly what time the Honorable Samuel L. Southard obtained title, but he lived there until 1814. Southard was Justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey. He served as United States Senator from 1821 to 1823 and again from 1833 to 1845. He was ad interim Secretary of Navy, War, and Treasury 1823-1825. In 1829 he was Attorney-General of New Jersey and in 1832 Governor. He sold the property to Alexander Bonnell, son of Lieutenant Abraham Bonnell of Clinton. Bonnell left his house to his wife; later his son Charles occupied it. From the Bonnells it passed into the possession of Charles Miller; this must have been somewhere around 1820.

Bibliography:

"Commemorative Exercises for 'Fleming Castle'"
Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical
Society New Series, October, 1928 (Volume
XIII, Number IV) Pages 431-433


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